

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-25

INFO OCT-01 ADP-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-09 H-02 INR-10 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-03 RSC-01 PRS-01 SS-15 USIA-12

NIC-01 CU-04 COME-00 RSR-01 IO-12 /110 W

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R 111810 Z MAY 73

FM AMEMBASSY ROME

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8715

C O N F I D E N T I A L ROME 3757

E. O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, IT

SUBJECT: CHAMBER DEBATE ON PUBLIC ORDER

1. BEGIN SUMMARY: MAY9-10 CHAMBER DEBATE ON PUBLIC ORDER PRODUCED ITS OWN BRIEF DISORDER ON THE FLOOR, BUT NO PROBLEMS FOR THE GOVERNMENT. PRIME MINISTER ANDREOTTI'S RESPONSE TO NUMEROUS INTERROGATIONS WAS FORCEFUL STATEMENT OF GOVERNMENT POSITION ON POLITICAL VIOLENCE AND NEO- FASCISM. END SUMMARY.

2. IN WHAT WAS SURELY MOST DISORDERLY SESSION OF CURRENT LEGISLATURE
IF NOT WORSE RUCKUS ON FLOOR OF PARLIAMENT IN RECENT YEARS, CHAMBER
OF DEPUTIES DEBATE ON PUBLIC ORDER MAY 9 DEGENERATED AT ONE POINT INTO SHORT BUT SPECTACULAR BRAWL BETWEEN SHOUTING, PUNCHING AND KICKING PCI AND MSI PARLIAMENTARIANS. NATURE OF DEBATE, WHICH WAS BILLED IN ADVANCE BY COMMUNISTS AND SOCIALISTS AS DENUNCIATION OF NEO- FASCISM AND THE MSI, WAS SUCH AS TO ALMOST INSURE SOME SORT OF OUTBREAK, AND WHEN IT CAME IT COULD NOT HAVE BEEN MUCH OF A SURPRISE.
BOTH SIDES SEEMED EAGER FOR THE CLASH, AND WHEN ORDER WAS RESTORED
CHAMBER PRESIDENT PERTINI (PSI) SAID HE FOUND IT IMPOSSIBLE TO PUT THE BLAME ON EITHER AND INSTEAD PLACED IT ON BOTH.

3. WHILE NO ONE WAS SERIOUSLY HURT IN THE TEN- MINUTE FRAY, IT WAS CLEARLY THE MSI THAT WAS TAKING THE LICKS IN THE DEBATE. THE MAIN THRUST OF BOTH THE INTERROGATIONS THAT HAD OCCASIONED THE DABATE AND THE COMMENTS OF THE VARIOUS PARTY SPEAKERS DURING
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IT -- THE MSI EXCEPTED -- WAS THAT FASCISM WAS AGAIN PRESENT IN ITALY AND RESPONSIBLE FOR ACTS OF POLITICAL VIOLENCE. THE PRINCIPAL QUESTION PUT TO THE GOVERNMENT -- BY THE PCI AND PSI -- WAS WHAT IT INTENDED TO DO ABOUT IT, ESPECIALLY WITH REFERENCE TO THE PROVISIONS OF THE CONSTITUTION OUTLAWING THE RECONSTITUTION OF THE FASCIST PARTY AND THE 1952 SCELBA LAW PROVIDING CRIMINAL PENALTIES FOR ANYONE WHO ATTEMPTED TO DO SO.

4. REPLYING FOR THE GOVERNMENT ON MAY 10, PRIME MINISTER ANDREOTTI DEPLORED ALL ACTS OF VIOLENCE AND LAWLESSNESS AND STRESSED THAT NO QUARTER WAS OR WOULD BE SHOWN TO ITS PERPETRATORS, WHATEVER THEIR POLITICS. IN RESPONSE TO PCI AND PSI ALLEGATIONS, ANDREOTTI CATEGORICALLY DENIED THAT HIS ADMINISTRATION OR ANY PART OF THE GOVERNMENT WAS SOFT ON NEO- FASCISM AND REBUTTED LEFTIST CHARGES THAT HE HAD COURTED MSI SUPPORT IN PARLIAMENT. QUOTING A 1947 STATEMENT BY DE GASPERI AS STILL EXPRESSING THE DC'S CONDEMNATION OF FASCISM AND THE NEED FOR VIGILANCE LEST IT OR ANY SIMILAR MOVEMENT REEMERGE, THE PRIME MINISTER ENDORSED THE VALIDITY OF ITALY'S ANTI- FASCIST STATUTES AND ASSURED THE CHAMBER THAT THEY WOULD BE APPLIED WHENEVER WARRANTED. ANDREOTTI NOTED THAT THE SCELBA LAW HAS BEEN INVOKED WITH REGARD TO RIGHT- WING EXTREMISTS OUTSIDE THE PARLIAMENTARY AREA AND STATED THAT IT WAS THE DUTY OF THE COURTS TO ENFORCE THE SCELBA LAW, CITING THE MANY CASES CURRENTLY BEFORE THEM. WHILE REAFFIRMING THE CONSTITUTIONAL ROLE OF THE JUDICIARY AND HIS FAITH IN ITS INTEGRITY AND IMPARTIALITY, ANDREOTTI CALLED ON THE NATION'S JUDGES TO SPEED UP THE PACE OF THEIR INVESTIGATIONS INTO ACTS OF POLITICAL VIOLENCE. ADDRESSING LEFTIST DEMANDS THAT THE GOVERNMENT ACKNOWLEDGE THAT THE MSI IS A NEO- FASCIST MOVEMENT AND SUPPRESS IT ACCORDINGLY, ANDREOTTI -- WHO NEVER MENTIONED THE MSI BY NAME -- OBSERVED THAT " THESE ARE DECISIONS OF EXTREME DELICACY," AND IMPLIED THAT IT WAS A LEGAL QUESTION FOR THE COURTS NOT THE GOVERNMENT TO DETERMINE.

5. COMMENT: AS NO MOTION WAS PRESENTED, THE CHAMBER DEBATE CONCLUDED WITHOUT A VOTE. ANDREOTTI'S SPEECH WAS CAREFULLY PREPARED AND WELL DELIVERED. HIS FIRM CONDEMNATION OF FASCISM AS WELL AS ALL FORMS OF POLITICAL VIOLENCE, WHILE DEEMED LESS THAN FULLY SATISFACTORY BY THE PCI AND PSI, WAS ENDORSED BY GOVERNMENT PARTY SPOKESMEN IN THE STATEMENTS THAT FOLLOWED. THE PRIME MINISTER'S CLEAR ANTI- FASCIST STAND -- WHICH, HOWEVER, CONFIDENTIAL

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STOPPED SHORT OF OPENLY BRANDING THE MSI A FASCIST PARTY --

REFLECTED THE MAINSTREAM OF HIS COALITION' S OPINION ON THE
MATTER AND WAS A CLEAR WARNING TO THE RIGHT THAT NOTWITHSTANDING
ITS RECENT SUCCESS AT THE POLLS, THE GOVERNMENT PARTIES WOULD NOT
LONG PUT UP WITH A MSI THAT REVERTED TO FASCIST METHODS, AND A
REMINDER THAT THE GOVERNMENT HAD IN THE SCELBA LAW THE MEANS TO
ENFORCE THAT WARNING. VOLPE

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*** Current Handling Restrictions *** n/a

*** Current Classification *** CONFIDENTIAL

Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: n/a
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 11 MAY 1973
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: golinofr
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1973ROME03757
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GDS
Errors: n/a
Film Number: n/a
From: ROME
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1973/newtext/t19730543/aaaajcgm.tel
Line Count: 123
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE
Office: ACTION EUR
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators:
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: golinofr
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 04 DEC 2001
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <04-Dec-2001 by shawdg>; APPROVED <05-Dec-2001 by golinofr>
Review Markings:

Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: <DBA CORRECTED> mcm 980209
Subject: CHAMBER DEBATE ON PUBLIC ORDER
TAGS: PINT, IT, PINT
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005